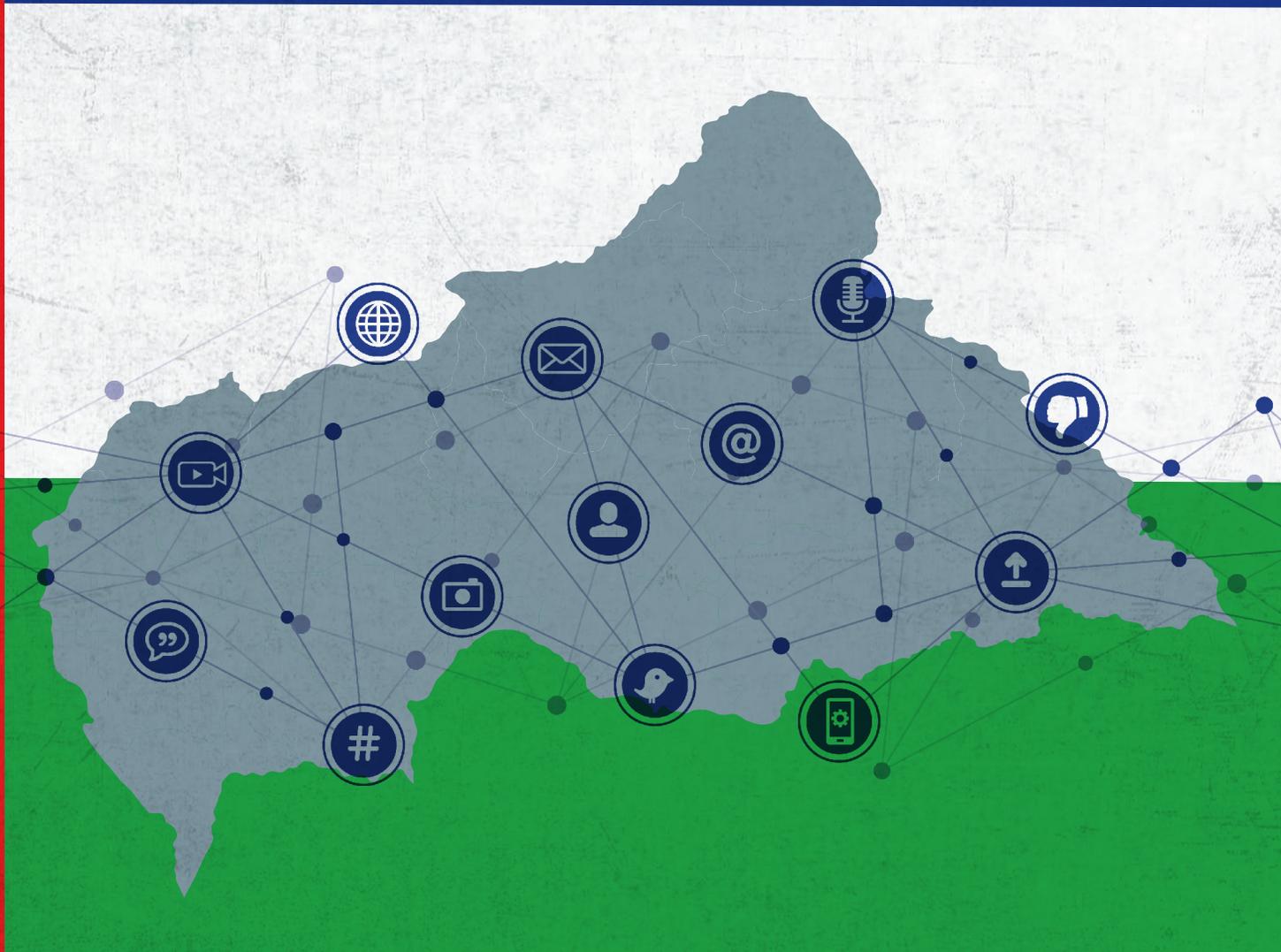


# A LEXICON OF HATEFUL AND INFLAMMATORY SPEECH IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC



## A LEXICON OF HATE SPEECH TERMS



PEACETECH LAB

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**The United States Institute of Peace (USIP)** is a national, nonpartisan, independent institute, founded by Congress and dedicated to the proposition that a world without violent conflict is possible, practical and essential for U.S. and global security. In conflict zones abroad, the Institute works with local partners to prevent, mitigate, and resolve violent conflict. To reduce future crises and the need for costly interventions, USIP works with governments and civil societies to build local capacities to manage conflict peacefully. The Institute pursues its mission by linking research, policy, training, analysis and direct action to support those who are working to build a more peaceful, inclusive world.

**The Association, Jeunesse en Marche pour le Développement en Centrafrique (AJEMADEC)** is a non-profit organization based in Bangui. AJEMADEC works with youth to enable the dynamic transformation of mentality and behaviors of communities for building trust, social cohesion and peaceful coexistence in order to contribute to development of the Central African Republic.



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## Purpose / Disclaimer

PeaceTech Lab’s overarching goals of this lexicon are to identify and explain hateful language, and also to offer alternative words and phrases that can be used to combat the spread of hateful language in the Central African Republic. PeaceTech Lab intends for this lexicon to serve as a resource to inform individuals and organizations involved in monitoring and combating hateful language in the Central African Republic. This lexicon will also contribute to the overall body of knowledge on this issue and inform other efforts around the globe.

The hateful language specified in this lexicon is not an exhaustive list, and the proposed meaning and contextualization of this language is not prescriptive. This lexicon is not a legal document. This lexicon is not intended to promote censorship, or to serve as a basis for a government, or any other authority, to restrict speech. The lexicon and the research that underlies it are not designed to be a reference or evidence for any legal or regulatory proceedings or exercise, including those involving criminal or civil sanctions or penalties. PeaceTech Lab recognizes that there is no international legal definition of what constitutes unlawful hate speech. PeaceTech Lab thus takes no position, and makes no recommendation, regarding what constitutes unlawful speech under the law of the Central African Republic (CAR), under the law of any other jurisdiction, or under international law.

Additionally, the order in which the hateful language appears in their respective sections of the lexicon does not infer additional significance other than what is described in the research methodology. Hateful language described in this lexicon should not be interpreted to be more or less harmful based on the order in which it appears in this lexicon, or for any other reason that is not expressly stated in this lexicon.

The list of terms included in this lexicon, as well as their proposed meaning and contextualization, are not static. Instead, the lexicon is a ‘snapshot’ (in time and space) of how hateful language is used, perceived and understood by those who contributed to the research process in CAR between October 2020 and March 2021. How these terms are understood — their meanings, usage, and the assessment of their harmful nature — may evolve or change over time. The non-static nature of hateful language is in line with the sometimes abrupt changes that can occur in the context of conflict and the evolution of language over time in any society, including in CAR. There is a significant subjective dimension to hateful language, and context can change the meaning of language used. The results of the research laid out in this lexicon should be approached as such.

Hateful language is by its very nature offensive. PeaceTech Lab is not using hateful language in its lexicons for the purpose of promoting or spreading it. Instead, PeaceTech Lab displays this hateful language to identify it, explain it, and inform the public.

# Introduction

Since 2014, PeaceTech Lab has undertaken research and worked with local partners in 13 countries to understand the dynamics of hate speech and the connection between the proliferation of hateful narratives online and violent events offline.

This research and the resulting lexicons seek to identify and contextualize the particular type of language that is likely to cause violence by exacerbating ongoing tensions and deepening ongoing crises within communities in conflict. Rather than assessing the general existence or prevalence of hate speech, each lexicon instead examines the most prevalent inflammatory terms, their origins and context, and their use in a particular country context. To successfully monitor and counter hateful speech in its degrees of severity, we must first identify the vocabulary most commonly used and the social and political context that makes these terms offensive, inflammatory, or potentially dangerous.

This lexicon of hate speech in the Central African Republic (CAR), developed in partnership with the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) and the Association, Jeunesse En Marche Pour Le Développement En Centrafrique (AJEMADEC), aims to highlight the problem of hateful speech in 2020 and 2021 amidst profound social and political upheavals in the country. As illustrated throughout this document, hate speech is *both* a symptom and cause of these divisions.

In the context of CAR's current reality of insecurity and conflict, inflammatory speech is used as a tool to achieve political and material ends. This ultimately results in the deepening of divisions between religious and ethnic communities, furthering of polarizing opinions, dehumanization of targeted groups, exacerbation of feelings of frustration and grievance, and lowering of the threshold to acts of violence. Several instances in recent years have demonstrated the power that hateful narratives and disinformation circulating online have and how they can further escalate already tense situations. More recently, the aftermath of the contested December 2020 elections and the violence and disruption wrought by the Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC) around these elections — combined with a steady increase in the number of social media users — is expected to lead to an increase in the frequency of inflammatory speech offline and across all media platforms.

In this context, and because of the nature of hateful language itself, this lexicon aims to serve as an initial guide to specific words and phrases identified by the surveyed population (during the period of October 2020 to March 2021) as particularly inflammatory or having inflammatory potential in CAR. The project team intends for this lexicon to serve as a resource to inform individuals and organizations involved in monitoring and combating hateful language in the Central African Republic. This lexicon will also contribute to the overall body of knowledge on this issue and inform other efforts around the globe.

# The Lexicon

To develop this lexicon, the project team, comprising staff and consultants of PeaceTech Lab, the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), and the Association, Jeunesse En Marche Pour Le Développement En Centrafrique (AJEMADEC), with support from Bria Londo, conducted a multi-phased research process that consisted of an extensive online survey,<sup>1</sup> a series of focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and consultations via phone, and expert reviews with Central African scholars and professionals. The research process allowed the team to identify the terms and phrases that are — according to all those surveyed — contributing to CAR’s deep societal divisions and tensions because they are themselves inflammatory or are used in an inflammatory way. For each term,<sup>2</sup> the **“Definition of Term or Phrase”** section contains information that respondents provided in the first three survey questions about the term’s origins, general meaning, and related information. The **“Why It’s Offensive or Inflammatory”** section discusses information that respondents provided as to why they believed the term either was offensive and inflammatory or could be used in an offensive and inflammatory way. This section often also discusses past usages, historical references to past conflict and grievances, and other contexts that provide a wider understanding of a term’s nuanced use and meaning. Finally, the **“Non-Offensive Alternative”** section includes terms provided by respondents to use in place of the offensive and inflammatory terms or that could be used to mitigate or counter those terms. The lexicon discussion groups critiqued this information and provided additional contextual analysis. Finally, a select and diverse group of Central African expert advisers supplemented the data from the survey, discussion group, and in-depth interviews with additional analysis and insights.

Further discussion about the survey, workshops, and other aspects of the project’s methodology can be found in the appendices at the end of the document.

## Country Context

### Introduction

The Central African Republic (CAR) is a country located in the heart of the African continent and marked by centuries of territorial contests and violent exploitation. A former French colony, the CAR became independent in 1960, but has struggled to consolidate democracy and build peace in the shadow of this legacy. Today, a weak government presence outside the capital contributes to instability and a thriving conflict economy. Armed groups control vast territories where they exploit CAR’s abundant natural resources and prey on local populations with virtual impunity. Cycles of retaliatory violence often target civilians along ethnic, political, and religious lines, and are also fueled by regional inequalities. These tensions have recently been exacerbated through a contested election process, where misinformation and hate speech have flourished.

### Colonialism, independence, and early statehood

The Central African Republic (CAR) as it exists now is the product of more than a century of contests for territorial control, and as a function of the exploitation of people and natural resources. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, France, Belgium, Great Britain, and Germany competed for control of territory in the Central African region. Ultimately, much of the region became French Congo, also known as French Equatorial Africa, with Belgium controlling territory south of the Oubangui River in what is presently the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Just north of that border, France colonized what would eventually become the Central African Republic. They first

established a post they named Bangui (which today is the capital city) and ultimately created the colony Oubangui-Chari (named for two of the major rivers that run through the territory).

When the French arrived in CAR much of the area was governed by a network of Muslim Sultanates that had been established in the 18<sup>th</sup> century with strong economic and social ties to the broader region. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the Sultanates also began to engage in slave raiding in order to supply both Saharan and Nile River trade routes, capturing tens of thousands of people. Their predatory relationship with these populations featured the use of tactics such as encircling entire villages, firing guns to create shock and noise, capturing as many of those fleeing as they could, and then lying in wait for those who returned.<sup>3</sup> When the French arrived on the scene at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they regarded the Sultans as illegitimate foreign colonizers.<sup>4</sup>

In 1899, the French government gave exclusive rights to some 40 companies for 30 years to exploit much of the land in the French Congo area, including parts of Oubangui-Chari. These companies used forced labor to exploit the country's natural resources. Because the colonial government was corrupt and unskilled, private companies effectively constituted the state in about half of the colony's territory. Unfortunately, they did not invest much in their businesses, let alone in infrastructure or services. Instead, they levied taxes on the local populations, whom they also forced to provide labor, occasionally relocating ethnic groups for this purpose. Failure to comply was met with coercive practices such as hostage-taking of women and children, and the burning down of entire villages.<sup>5</sup>

After decades of slave raiding, new diseases, and forced labor, the population was both greatly reduced and poised for rebellion. The Kongo-Wara War, also known as the War of the Hoe Handle or the Gbaya War, lasted from 1928 to 1931 and began with the nonviolent teachings of a local Gbaya leader. Barka Ngainoumbey, also known as "Karinou" (one who would change the world, or one who collects and rolls up the earth) and sometimes referred to as a prophet and healer, preached non-violent resistance to French colonial rule (as well as to the Peuhl or Fulani who served as administrators on behalf of the French in what is now Cameroon).<sup>6</sup> The resistance tactics that he advocated included boycotts of European products and the use of a "kong-wara" (wooden hoe handle) meant to offer protection. Small scale clashes between the Gbaya and Peuhl became a mechanism for spreading Ngainoumbey's ideology while also escalating the conflict. Historians estimate that during this period, Ngainoumbey garnered nearly 350,000 adherents.<sup>7</sup> Ngainoumbey's followers began attacking the French and burned down the town of Bouar. The French countered these attacks, killing Ngainoumbey, but the rebellion continued to spread across the region. This resulted in a war that killed thousands but failed to remove French control of the territory.

Despite the setback and violence of the Kongo-Wara war, another powerful and influential advocate for decolonization rose to the fore. Barthélemy Boganda was adopted by Catholic missionaries as a child and became the first ordained Catholic priest from Oubangui-Chari. Boganda grew into a popular leader, and in 1946 he was elected to represent Oubangui-Chari in the French National Assembly where he advocated against colonialism and racism. He then went on to found the Movement for the Social Evolution of Black Africa (MESAN) in 1950. He was poised to help lead the territory into its early independence and statehood but was killed in a plane crash in 1959 before that could happen. Rumors abounded at the time that the French were responsible and these rumors persist to this day.

When the Central African Republic was finally granted independence in 1960 without Boganda at the helm, his cousin David Dacko became Provisional Chief of the Republic, and then ultimately the first President of the new state. Achieving independence, the newly-minted Central

African Republic was forced to contend with the legacy of nearly a century of colonial violence and exploitation as it attempted to establish and consolidate a democratic government. Dacko ultimately created a repressive one-party state, and his close relationship with the French meant that they preferred to keep him in power (even restoring him to power after he was overthrown by Colonel Jean-Bédél Bokassa in 1966).<sup>8</sup>

### **Authoritarianism, rebellion, and ethnic cleansing**

Despite early gains in independence and democracy, subsequent leaders established more authoritarian regimes in the nascent republic. These leaders built upon the foundations of violence, exploitation, and non-competitive political processes that had been previously established under the French and the Dacko regime. Only six years after CAR's independence, Jean-Bédél Bokassa seized power and named himself Emperor of the Central African Empire, continuing his predecessor's repressive practices and enriching himself at the state's expense. He remained in power until the French reinstated Dacko in 1979, but Dacko's tenure was again short as he was overthrown in 1981 by General André Kolingba, who established a military government. Kolingba's government is widely credited as disciplined and effective, including in securing the borders, broadening state authority, and expanding social services.<sup>9</sup> However, despite Kolingba's governance successes, he continued to oppress political competition and capitalize on ethnic divisions and patronage networks.

In 1982, when Ange-Félix Patassé and François Bozizé attempted to seize power from General André Kolingba, the general took steps to secure his power by reducing the number of people from northern ethnic groups in the country's security forces. These groups were called "nordistes" (northerners) and included Bozizé's ethnic group, the Gbaya. Kolingba then installed his ethnic group, the Yakoma, in a disproportionately large number of positions within the government and security forces.<sup>10</sup> He also severely curtailed government salaries, weakening the civil service. As a result, when Kolingba ultimately caved to international and popular pressure to hold elections in 1993, the charismatic Ange-Félix Patassé was more than a match for him in the campaign and won the election with 53% of the vote. Once at the helm of the country's only political party, Patassé not only inherited many problems — he was also under pressure to deliver.

It soon became evident after a few years in office that Patassé was not an effective leader and was unable to resolve the country's problems. In October 2001, Patassé decided to dismiss Bozizé from service after he failed to cooperate with investigations into his role in the failed coup d'état of May 2001 attributed to Kolingba. Bozizé still retained supporters, however, and was able to regroup with them in Chad. Overall dissatisfaction with Patassé's leadership ultimately helped General François Bozizé to overthrow him. Bozizé and his supporters ultimately seized control of Bangui in March of 2003, and installed Bozizé as head of state. He was able to consolidate power with the support of Chad, by working with the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), and by winning elections in 2005 and 2011. His governance style, however, focused increasingly on tribalism.<sup>11</sup> His tenure was also marked by ongoing international intervention to calm tensions between the government and rebel groups. These interventions were largely unsuccessful, and the parties involved often used peace agreements opportunistically to gain concessions while parties violated the terms. This all came to a head in March 2013, when a predominantly Muslim coalition of armed groups, the Séléka, seized power and forced Bozizé to flee.

The Séléka coalesced mainly in response to a shared set of unresolved grievances from the implementation of the 2008 Libreville comprehensive peace agreement, particularly the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) program for combatants and the



disparity in development between Bangui and the Northeast. However, they were also joined by opportunistic fighters from Chad and Darfur. They installed their leader, Michel Djotodia, in power and began the process of implementing a transitional government in agreement with ECCAS. While Djotodia officially disbanded the Séléka a few months after coming to power, he was unable to control them and they continued to commit atrocities against civilians. In response, community-based self-defense groups began to join together with each other and with former presidential guards to oppose the Séléka. Together, they became known as the Anti-Balaka.<sup>12</sup>

As violence escalated, the conflict reached a turning point on December 5, 2013, when the Anti-Balaka launched an attack to drive the Séléka out of Bangui. However, they also targeted unaffiliated Muslim citizens to drive them out as well. The resulting violence killed approximately 100 people. In response, France immediately launched Operation Sangaris, doubling the 600 French troops already in the capital supporting the existing African Union (AU) peacekeeping mission. Together, these forces were meant to bolster security and restore stability in Bangui by disarming the Séléka. ECCAS also pressured Michel Djotodia to step down as President of the Transition, citing his inability to control the Séléka. Unfortunately, by disarming the Séléka and removing Michel Djotodia, international intervention shifted the domestic balance of power in favor of the Anti-Balaka.

The Anti-Balaka seized this opportunity and in February 2014 began systematically murdering the minority Muslim population of western CAR. Referring to the Muslims as “foreigners,” the Anti-Balaka sought to remove them from the country. Tens of thousands of Muslims fled, their homes and livelihoods destroyed behind them. Others sought refuge in so-called “enclaves,” such as the Pk5 neighborhood in Bangui. Fearing an escalation to genocide, international actors were once again quick to intervene. The UN Security Council approved a peacekeeping force in April 2014 — the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (also referred to as MINUSCA). A United Nations International Commission of Inquiry determined in December 2014 that the Anti-Balaka campaign amounted to ethnic cleansing and estimated that as much as 80% of the Muslim population had been forcibly removed.<sup>13</sup>

### **Hate speech and election violence**

In the years since the Anti-Balaka campaign, attempts to restore peace and stability have been met with mixed success. CAR was eventually able to transition back to constitutional democracy in late 2015, and citizens elected Bozizé’s former prime minister, Faustin-Archange Touadéra, as the new president in February 2016. In February 2019, Touadéra signed a peace agreement with 14 recognized armed groups. Nonetheless, violence continues to be directed at civilians on the basis of religious or ethnic identity. Muslim citizens in particular continue to face political and social marginalization, in addition to violence targeting their communities and places of worship. In one notorious incident on May 13, 2017, the Anti-Balaka launched an attack on Muslims in Bangassou, forcing 2,000 people to take refuge in a local cathedral. The attack took place two weeks before the start of Ramadan, and reinvigorated international warnings about the preconditions for genocide.<sup>14</sup> As a result, the MINUSCA Human rights division began to track hate speech, and in January 2018 added hate speech and incitement to violence as sanctions criteria.

These concerns about persistent hate speech and disinformation intensified in the lead-up to the 2020-2021 general election and proved to be well-founded. When the Constitutional Court rejected the candidacy of former President Bozizé — who still holds a significant number of

supporters in the Central African Republic despite having been forced into exile for six years — conflict quickly escalated. Six armed groups formed the Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC) to demand that the elections be postponed, and that a new round of peace talks be initiated. The CPC began attacking civilians, seizing strategic locales, and threatening to march on the capital, Bangui. They intimidated voters and burned election material, such that voting only successfully took place in 2,560 out of 5,448 polling stations. Thousands of displaced persons were unable to participate.

While the election was able to take place with support from the international community, the CPC's positioning provided them an opportunity to attempt a coup on January 13, 2021, and ultimately allowed them to cut off road access to the capital for nearly two months. Meanwhile, the political opposition immediately challenged Touadéra's win due to the irregularities and very low voter turnout, and the CAR government has accused Bozizé of attempting a coup. Rumors continue to circulate that Russia is backing Touadéra, and that the French are backing the political opposition. In this environment, misinformation and incendiary speech are particularly heightened as questions around the election, its outcome, and the next steps for the peace process hang in the balance. Efforts to combat these issues — notably among journalists and bloggers — focus primarily on challenging misinformation and fake news, which is difficult given the lack of fully independent media. The High Council on Communication (HCC) was re-established in 2014 and was given authority to provide regulation in this area, ultimately developing a “National Plan for the Prevention of Incitement to Hate and Violence” in collaboration with partners. However, this initiative is under-resourced. International experts are advocating for hate speech to be prohibited in the CAR, and for the HCC to receive additional support to monitor elections.<sup>15</sup>

## Insulting and Inflammatory Speech

The below list contains hateful phrases and terms that survey participants identified as being used most frequently in an insulting and inflammatory manner in the current Central African context.

For the language used in the survey, PeaceTech Lab used “offensive and inflammatory” as a reference for the terms and phrases the project team sought to identify in the survey (as opposed to naming the concept of “hate speech”). “Offensive and inflammatory” remains a more readily understood threshold that reflects hate speech's core meaning as conveying offense, as well as possible incitement to action or discrimination.

These terms were then discussed and contextualized over the course of four validation workshops and a series of phone interviews, after which they were submitted to a group of experts.<sup>16</sup>

It is worth noting that the significance and context of usage (offline and online on social media) of the majority of the terms mentioned here may change with the political and social situation in the Central African Republic, which is currently very dynamic. The below list represents only the beginning of efforts undertaken to create an inventory of vocabulary used to propagate narratives that fuel divisions and conflicts between opposing communities and groups.

**The list is presented in alphabetical order.**

# Legend for Subsections in Words and Phrases

## Word or Phrase

These are words or phrases identified by both survey respondents and validation workshop participants as being offensive and inflammatory and prevalent in offline and online discourse.

## Other Spellings and Related References

This subsection may include other common spellings or variations of the main word or phrase encountered during the survey and validation process. It may also include terms and references that are associated with or relate to the main word or phrase as identified by survey respondents and workshop participants. This section is meant to provide additional information or context for the reader to further understand the usage of the main term. Having a 'cluster' of terms as a reference can also be helpful for monitoring on social media. Moreover, there may be regional or other different applications of the main word or phrase.

## Definition of Word or Phrase

This subsection may discuss what the term designates, who uses it, who is the target, and in what context it is used. Direct quotes and examples provided by workshop participants may be included to give the lexicon a richer context and to show how a term or phrase is used by or in a community.

### 13. Mbororo

**Other Spellings and Related References:** *M'bororo, A bororo, Bororo aga djo, Sheep, Taba*

**Definition of Term or Phrase:** "Mbororo" is the name of a nomadic group in Cameroon and the Central African Republic.<sup>22</sup> In the Central African Republic, its name appears to have become a synonym for "nomad" and is used as such. According to the surveys, this usage is utilized to refer to members of the Fulani community. The Fulani are a large, traditionally pastoral, and majority-Muslim ethnic group (of which the Mbororo are a part)<sup>23</sup> that inhabits a vast expanse of land that stretches from the Sahel to West Africa.

The respondents to the survey explained that the term can be used in a way that carries a negative connotation, such as "you are acting like a Mbororo." In this case, this phrase means to act "foolishly, like an illiterate person" or "like a bushman, an uncivilized person," because "someone who herds livestock never attended school." Some participants in the workshops asserted that this could also mean that "nomadic herders are considered to be like animals." In a similar vein, "mbororo agajo," which, literally translated, means the "Fulani has become a person," means, according to the participants, "is it possible for a nomad to succeed in society?"

The negative connotations associated with "mbororo" and this usage of the term must be examined in light of the Central African Republic's recent history, during which the country has witnessed outbursts of violence against Fulani populations. According to the surveys, the Fulani are accused of trafficking arms: "it is said that it is the Fulani who are bringing arms into the Central African Republic," explains one participant, and are thus accused of contributing to the violence of the conflicts and the confrontations between the militias. They are also associated with the Séléka, who count members of the Fulani among their ranks.

**Why It's Offensive or Inflammatory:** This term is insulting when it is used towards Fulanis as a group, for the purpose of indicating that the Fulani are outsiders and "are not considered to be Central Africans" because they are "nomads who are not members of the community."

The prejudices and negative sentiments conveyed and propagated through this usage of the term help maintain distrust and fuel resentment between communities. As one participant in the validation workshops stated, this term also seeks "to convey that you are not a part of Central African society because you are nothing but a passerby."

#### Sample Post(s):



**Translation:** *English translation: Eh you mbororo or arabou without bouta you can't close your big shit mouth you are nomads now we want more of you is this complicated to leave our country calmly and if you don't leave we'll eat you long live CAR without the arabou*

**Non-Offensive Alternative:** None provided

## Why It's Offensive or Inflammatory

This subsection explains why this term can be considered hate speech (i.e., why it is more than just an insult) and what impact - intended or indirect - it has on a targeted individual or group or in the context of the country's social and political dynamics. The effect or impacts are again based on responses by survey and workshop participants, as well as expert reviewers.

## Sample Post(s)

Examples of posts are provided to show how the main words, and associated and related terms, are used on social media, their context, and how variations in usages occur.

## Non-Offensive Alternative

These words or phrases are also provided by survey and workshop participants and are meant as constructive, non-offensive alternatives that might be used instead of the offensive or inflammatory word or phrase.

## 1. A Mbo ti Touadéra (the dogs of President Touadéra)

**Other Spellings and Related References:** *Face covering, German Shepherd, Coronavirus, Palace guard dogs*

**Definition of Word or Phrase:** “A mbo ti Touadéra” means “the dogs of President Touadéra” in Sango. Survey respondents identified several uses of this expression, which always carries a negative connotation.

In the first instance, according to participants in the validation workshops, this term was used to refer to individuals who follow the COVID-19 protective guidelines issued by the authorities of the Central African Republic, such as wearing a mask in public places. In this context, this term also refers to the Touadéra government in a negative way. With the relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions, this term appears to have disappeared from use.

In the second instance, this expression is used also in reference to political leaders and supporters of President Touadéra, but in a broader sense. In this context, the expression suggests that the aforementioned individuals follow Touadéra in an unconditional manner and obey him blindly, without thinking: “just as a dog follows its master.”

**Why It’s Offensive or Inflammatory:** Firstly, this expression is insulting and dehumanizing because it equates human beings to dogs, such as in the phrase: “Look at Touadéra’s dogs.” One survey respondent explained that “this is dehumanizing because people are being called animals that blindly obey orders, like trained dogs.”

The intention of this term, in the words of another survey participant, is to “express contempt. It is meant to denigrate the people who follow the government’s guidelines like dogs that follow their master without thinking.” The othering of a group through dehumanization contributes to the heightening of tensions and fears in a context that is already very tense.

### Sample Post(s):



**Translation:** *They say here that oooooh true true, there is no Corona in the Central African Republic, and when they wear a mask, we call them palace guard dogs. Info collected on the street among the public.*

*It is a bit serious, but okay. Wear [the mask] for yourself and spread the propaganda for the good of the nation. This disease is real.*

*Seriously? Oh, Central Africans.*



**Translation:** *English translation: Dog of Touadera chilling*

**Non-Offensive Alternative:** *Compatriots, brother, ita*

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## 2. Arabou

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**Other Spellings and Related References:** *Arabo, make Arabo, Arabou sans bouta, toubè, Bengue, Arabou sans bouta, Ga gango*

**Definition of Term or Phrase:** “Arabou” appears to be a form of the word “Arab” that is used in Sango. According to the participants in the validation workshops, this term is used in an interchangeable manner to refer to a person who practices Islam (“those who wear big boubous [flowing robes] and practice Islam”) – irrespective of whether or not the individual is Central African. The origins of this use of “Arabou” can likely be traced to the country’s history, and specifically to the existence of Muslim sultanates that were established in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

**Why It’s Offensive or Inflammatory:**

Most respondents to the surveys considered this to be a negative term used to stigmatize and ostracize Muslim individuals as foreigners in Central African society. In addition, the term insinuates that Muslims are fundamentally different from other Central Africans. These sentiments are also expressed through phrases like “you, Arabou, stay on the fringes of our society” or “bouba arabo [stupid Arab].”

In the current context, this rhetoric, which positions a group of people as foreign and “on the fringe” of Central African society contributes to a process of othering Muslim populations. This maintains and deepens existing divisions between communities, creating fertile ground for conflicts and armed confrontations.

## Sample Post(s):



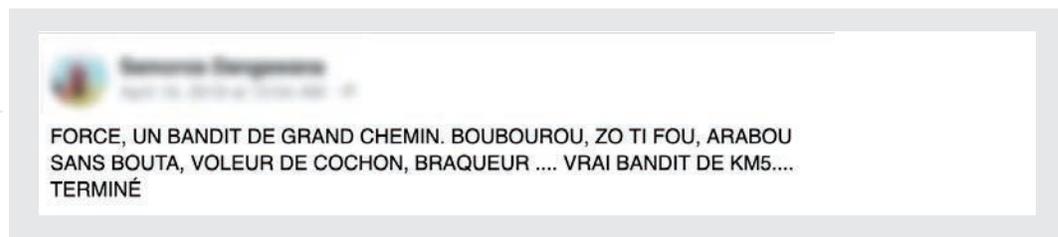
**Translation:** *WHERE is General Arda Hakouma's clown  
Called failed Arabou Dans Ame aka  
The stray dog  
With CEil Ceil and 13 others in  
Bangui, Central African Republic*

*Always in the service of the nation.  
Stay strong my brother*

**Translation:** *Starting tomorrow I'll be cleaning up my friends list. If I find an arabou without bouta I'll remove them one by one. I hate arabou.*



**French translation:**  
*Boubouru traduit par « celui qui ne sait rien » qui veut dire « un vaut rien » et zo ti fou traduit par « personne qui a de la folie » qui veut dire « un malade mentale ».*



**English translation:**  
*Strength, a highway robber. An ignorant, crazy, Arabou sans Bouta, pig thief, raider... Real bandit of KM5... finished.*

**Non-offensive Alternative:** *Foreigner*

## 3. Balaka / Anti Balaka

**Other Spellings and Related References:** *A Balaka, Self-defense, Christian militia*

**Definition of Term or Phrase:** “Anti-Balaka” is the name of the self-defense militias (an alliance of several majority-Christian groups) that have existed since the 1990s, and that took up arms against the Séléka in 2013 during the most recent civil war in the Central African Republic. Some say that “Balaka” means “machete” in Sango. Other sources claim that the name comes from militia members’ belief in the protective force of the “gris gris” (charms), called “bulletproof AK” (AK 47). Accused of having committed a number of atrocities towards civil society, this term is burdensome, both in meaning and in connotation. “There are many victims of the Anti-Balaka,”

one participant explained in the validation workshops. “There are many people who have family members who were killed by the Anti-Balaka.”

According to the surveys, the term “Balaka” (the abbreviated version of “Anti-Balaka”) is used today to stigmatize “every person who behaves in an antisocial manner,” which, for some, is equivalent to treating him or her as a “criminal.”

This term is also sometimes associated with members of the Christian community in general. In this sense, as one participant in the validation workshops explained: “The Muslims treat the Christians as ‘Balaka,’ especially in areas where the conflict is active and in areas under Séléka rule.”

**Why It’s Offensive or Inflammatory:** This term can be used in an insulting and inflammatory manner because, as one participant in the validation workshops explained, designating a person as a member or a sympathizer of an opposing militia group (in the context of an active armed conflict) can put him or her in danger. “It is very dangerous to be designated as ‘Balaka,’ [in other words], as a supporter of the Balaka,” because “they do not tolerate each other.” The use of this term in a generalized manner towards each person in the Christian community “enflames divisions and sustains fear and violence,” as one participant in the survey stated.

This usage must also be placed within the context of violence committed against Muslim communities in the Central African Republic’s recent past. Hence, one participant explained: “the Muslims are afraid of the militia groups.” One survey respondent recounted: “in the localities in which the Balakas reign (like, for example, Ndjoukou), it is rare to see a Muslim. Oftentimes, they are not tolerated, they are not trusted, and they do not leave their own localities.” The term “Balaka,” when used in this way, therefore constitutes a term that serves to maintain and enflame feelings of fear and rejection among communities.

### Sample Post(s):



**Translation:** *The Balaka will lynch you and make smoked meat out of you in order to export it to your home, in your countries of origin, so that your parents can nurture themselves from it (Chad and Soudan Niger)*



**Translation:** *A really courageous risk taker*

*You allowed the Balaka criminals to go free  
And now you say that things will end badly*



**Translation:** *The Anti-Balaka only attacked Muslim civilians. Their creed does not differ at all from that of the genocidal Hutu militias.*

**Non-Offensive Alternative:** *Self-defense and resistance groups*

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## 4. Bandai

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**Other Spellings and Related References:** *Bandaye, bandaii, cridi*

**Definition of Term or Phrase:** According to the surveys, the term “bandai” refers to Christians. Some suggested that the term comes from Arabic (originating in Chad). It is possible that it is a version of the name of the Banda ethnic group. The participants in the validation workshops estimated that the term was originally used by the self-defense groups around the market called “Km5” in Bangui, which formed following the events of 2013 (particularly after the Anti-Balaka attack of December 5, 2013).<sup>17</sup> The term was used to designate as “bandai” those Christians who came to establish a market in this majority-Muslim neighborhood.

After 2013, according to the participants in the validation workshops, usage of this term became more generalized and widespread. For some respondents, it simply means “non-Muslim” or — in a more negative context — “traitor” when used by members of the Muslim community against another member of the community.

**Why It’s Offensive or Inflammatory:** “Bandai” is an inflammatory term because it categorizes a person, based on his or her adherence to a religious group, through the use of a word that carries a negative connotation, both in terms of its origin and in the context in which it is used. This term seeks to differentiate, and thus to otherize, by signaling the non-conformity of a person to a given group. The use of this term helps maintain and widen divisions between religious communities.

**Non-Offensive Alternative:** None provided

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## 5. Bengue

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**Other Spellings and Related References:** *Arabo, Kota Bongo, bengé, bèngé, Ala a bengue so*

**Definition of Term or Phrase:** Some sources suggest that “bengue” means “brown and skinny” (“be” and “ngue”) in Sango. According to the surveys, this term is understood to mean “someone who is slender and has fair skin.” The participants in the surveys explained that this is a term that has a negative connotation as a reference to Muslims. Some have indicated that “bengue” used to be considered a neutral term in the 1990s. Since then, however, it has acquired



a negative connotation under the influence of successive conflicts and their catastrophic ramifications for the civilian population.

In the current context, the term's use aims to stigmatize members of the Muslim community and to designate them as foreign to Central African society. Some use it interchangeably with the term "Arabo/Arabou" (whose literal translation is "Arab").

**Why It's Offensive or Inflammatory:** The term "Bengue" is insulting and inflammatory because referring to a group of people by their physical attributes is dehumanizing. At the peak of the 2013-2014 crisis, the use of this term served as a justification for violence against members of the Muslim community.

According to the survey, in places where this term is used in this way today — and for those individuals who use it — the word signifies that "Muslims are different, foreign, and separate, exhibiting the traits of bandits. They are not well looked upon." Other survey respondents explain that this term means "sous-Muslim" or "Arab with no intellectual value."

The use of "Bengue" thus contributes to the otherization of Muslim communities by presenting them as fundamentally different than other Central Africans. The very negative and demeaning connotations that have attached themselves to this term have both created and contributed to the sustenance of profound distrust and divisions between communities. Within the context of a volatile political environment it has also contributed to armed clashes and attacks. For example, a participant in the validation workshops explained: "After the creation of the Séléka (a coalition of militias said to be majority Muslim), this term has been viewed more and more negatively."

#### Sample Post(s):



**Non-Offensive Alternative:** *Muslim compatriot*

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## 6. Chamaroka

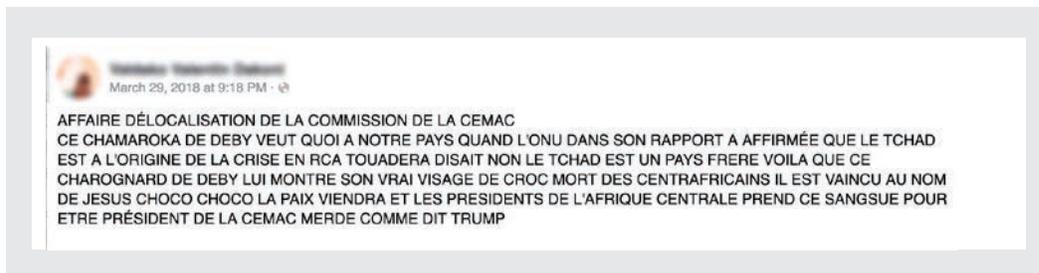
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**Other Spellings and Related References:** *Chifa chamaroka, PD, gay*

**Definition of Term or Phrase:** "Chamaroka," which means "abomination" in Sango, probably represents an adaptation of an Arabic word. This term is used to refer to homosexuals or, more precisely, to insult and accuse a person of being homosexual (a sexual orientation that elicits contempt and prejudice). Although homosexuality is not illegal in the Central African Republic,<sup>18,19</sup> it is still considered to be taboo. As one survey participant explained, "this tarnishes the image of the person."

**Why It's Offensive or Inflammatory:** This term is insulting and dehumanizing because it describes a person as an abomination — which is, by definition, a monstrosity or something “that provokes a sentiment of horror and aversion.” Some participants compared this indictment to a “loss of identity,” or “a man automatically becoming a woman,” thus losing his “male status.” According to the participants in the validation workshops, homosexual persons (or those designated as such) can become victims of violence and become ostracized by their community. They confirm that this term “strongly encourages acts of violence against an individual.” In effect, this process of otherization aims to demean and isolate a group of people who are identified by a common characteristic, thus enabling discrimination and violence.

**Sample Post(s):**



**Non-Offensive Alternative:** None provided

**Translation:** CEMAC Commission delocalization case  
*This chamaroka [abomination] Deby wants to do what to our country when the UN in its report affirmed that Chad is the cause of the crisis in CAR[,] Touadera said no[,] Chad is a brother country[,] Here is this scavenger Deby showing his true face of an undertaker of Central Africans[,] He is defeated in Jesus' name[,] Volatile peace will come and the presidents of Central Africa will take this blood for being president of CEMAC shit like Trump said.*

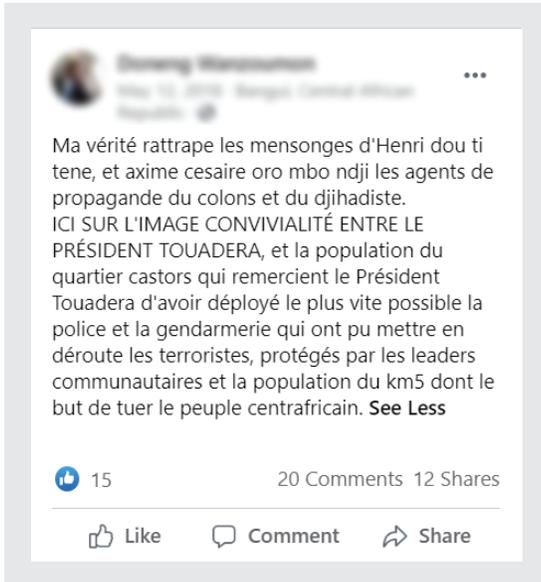
## 7. Jihadist

**Other Spellings and Related References:** *Extremist terrorist, Mujahideen, Janjawid*

**Definition of Term or Phrase:** According to the surveys, the term “Jihadist” is used to insult members of the Muslim community. The participants in the validation workshops explained that it insinuates that the targeted person is “implicated in intra-communal tensions and even violent acts.”

**Why It's Offensive or Inflammatory:** As one survey respondent explained, referring to someone as a terrorist “is a very offensive term; it is a driver of violence.” Though it seems to be used rather rarely, the term’s usage is inflammatory because it conflates the Muslim community with the terrorist movement. As a result, it can be used as a pretext for vengeance or violence. In the context of the Central African Republic’s recent history, especially considering the violence committed against Muslim communities, using the term in this way helps sustain intra-communal fear and tensions.

**Sample Post(s):**



**Translation:** *My truth counters the lies of Henri, in which you believe, [Sango] and the agents of colonialist and jihadist propaganda. This image here shows the warmth between President Touadéra and the inhabitants of the Castors Neighborhood thanking President Touadéra for having deployed the police and the gendarmerie as quickly as possible. They were able to utterly defeat the terrorists, protected by the community leaders and the residents of km5, whose objective is to kill the people of the Central African Republic.*



**Translation:** "HOMELAND OR DEATH: TOGETHER WE WILL DEFEAT THE JIHADISTS" THE ENDS JUSTIFY THE MEANS, AND THE PRESENT ALLOWS US TO UNDERSTAND OUR PAST MISTAKES IN ORDER TO BETTER BUILD OUR FUTURE TOGETHER  
UNITY – DIGNITY – WORK  
[PICTURE: THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC MUST BE FOR NATIVE CENTRAL AFRICANS [new line] Multi-secular and not by coincidence]

**Non-Offensive Alternative:** None provided

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## 8. Congo

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**Other Spellings and Related References:** *The Congos, The fetishes, Chetane, Mônô*

**Definition of Term or Phrase:** According to the surveys, the term “Congo” refers to the neighboring Democratic Republic of the Congo and is used by members of the Muslim community to label members of the Christian community. The participants in the validation discussions did not arrive at a consensus regarding the origin of the term with the aforementioned meaning, except that it refers to “he/she who comes from the opposite bank of the river,” and that it is used to designate affiliation with the Christian community.

**Why It’s Offensive or Inflammatory:** This term designates affiliation to a religious community by the name of a third country, which contributes to the othering of the targeted group. In addition, as participants in the survey explained, this communicates that “[you] are not a part of our community, [you] are not like me, you do not follow the same customs.” Within the context of intra-communal tensions, presenting another group as different and incompatible with one’s own group exacerbates distrust and divisions. According to the telephonic survey, this dynamic has become intensified since the start of the December 2020 electoral period and the events that occurred thereafter.

**Non-Offensive Alternative:** None provided

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## 9. Cridi

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**Other Spellings and Related References:** *The cridis, Pig eaters, Evil infidels*

**Definition of Word or Phrase:** The term “cridi” means “non-Muslim” in Sango. Certain respondents to the questionnaires thought that this word also means “non-believer,” or alternatively, that this term refers to a person “who does not respect the laws of Islam.” According to the results of the surveys and the validation workshops, “cridi” appears to be used to refer to non-Muslims or Muslim persons accused of not properly obeying the precepts of Islam.

**Why It’s Offensive or Inflammatory:** According to these two usages, this term places the targeted individual outside of a given community. In the current context in which divisions between religious communities are significant, the usage of this term contributes to the intensification of these divides. The respondents were in agreement that in both cases, “this term creates a sentiment of distrust [among communities], of segregation, and of social exclusion.”

**Non-Offensive Alternative:** None provided

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## 10. Ga Gango

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**Other Spellings and Related References:** *a ga gango, gagango la, gagagnon, ga gagno, gagango, danga kando, wandé*

**Definition of Term or Phrase:** “Ga Gango” means “came from elsewhere” or “foreigner” in Sango. When used in a neutral way, this term refers to persons who are not ethnic Central Africans. However, according to the respondents to the questionnaire, it appears to have

acquired a strong negative connotation — especially in the country’s recent past. The rise of ethnic tribalism during the 1980s intensified thereafter due to the crises of the 1990s and successive domestic armed conflicts. As a result, “ga gango” began to be used in a denigrating manner in reference to persons “who are not from the same locality,” or who are from a different region of the Central African Republic. In addition, the majority of the survey respondents confirmed that this term is definitely “used by natives of a locality against newcomers in these communities” — in other words, to refer to those who were not born there in order to tell them that “you are not a son/daughter of this country.”

This term identifies the designated person as “the other,” with which is also associated with the idea of being “an opportunist or [a] profiteer.” Some participants in the validation workshops signaled that this word can be particularly problematic when it connotes belonging to another ethnic group. Lastly, others specified that “ga gango” was used towards “Christians who converted to Islam” or “Chadian and/or Fulani Muslims.”

**Why It’s Offensive or Inflammatory:** Calling someone “ga gango” is akin to identifying them as “other” or as a “foreigner” in order to isolate and exclude them, to signal that they are not accepted as a member of the local community, and to signal their incompatibility with a given group. The process of otherization dehumanizes the individuals characterized as such and enables discrimination. As the participants in the workshops explained, the usage of the word “creates a feeling of distrust among local/native inhabitants, as well as a feeling of rejection and social discrimination” among the persons targeted by this term. These feelings are expressed in phrases like “remain silent! You are foreign profiteers” and “foreign profiteers do not have the right to speak.” This expression is particularly heavy and problematic in cases where the person, or these “foreigners,” are members of another ethnic group. In sum, in a national context marred by conflict and tensions along ethnic and religious lines, the use of this term helps sustain distrust towards others and divisions between communities. Finally, it is worth noting that this was one of the terms mentioned most frequently in the surveys.

**Non-Offensive Alternative:** *Invited foreigners, newcomers, compatriots*

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## 11. Gbaya

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**Other Spellings and Related References:** *Baya*

**Definition of Term or Phrase:** “Gbaya” is the name of one of the ethnic groups in the Central African Republic and is thus an inherently neutral term. Nevertheless, some participants in the validation workshops explained that this term is used by Muslim populations to refer to non-Muslim ethnic groups, especially Central Africans hailing from the north of the country. According to anecdotes related in the surveys, the origin of this usage can be traced back to a historical mistake originally made by the first Muslim explorers [who came to the country], who thought that the entire population of the territory was Gbaya.

In the contemporary context, this name appears to have acquired a negative connotation in its usage. As one of the participants in the validation workshops explained, “we treat [the Gbayas] as bushmen, as people who are not very civilized.” This reputation appears to have gained traction during the administration of former President Bozizé, who in 2003 “sent for the Gbaya to conscript them into his army” and into public service because he himself is Gbaya.

**Why It's Offensive or Inflammatory:** This term is used to differentiate and otherize persons belonging to this ethnicity as a group characterized as different and, as a result, apart from the rest of society. The negative connotation of “not very civilized” demeans and dehumanizes. One survey participant explained: “This term is a racial remark.”

According to the validation discussions, a certain negative reputation has existed for a long time, but this has intensified since the recent events surrounding the 2020 elections, the failed actions undertaken in January 2021 by former President Bozizé and his supporters, and the chaos and violence that ensued thereafter.

Some participants responded, affirming that today, calling someone “Gbaya” means “You are a traitor: Bozizé has returned from exile and wishes to regain power.”

### Sample Post(s):



**Translation:** *And then? Clearly this is to beat down that useless #Gbaya of #Bozizé's with his #Antibalaka druggies, given that all of the #Seleka supports #Touadera, no?*

*PIOZZA #BSP – [flower and flag emojis] @BS\_PIO... - November 11, 2020*

*#CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC*  
*1-Withdrawal of French support for the electoral process.*  
*2-Publication of an exclusive investigation on the French channel, M6, on 08/11/2020 about the porosity of our borders.*  
*3-Arrival today of 500 Russian soldiers [Russian flag] in Bangui [CAR flag]*  
*4-What will follow? @GouvCF*



**Translation:** *This type of gbaya is unbelievable... Stubborn like his ass. Even if he does not watch his butt too much. Failed thief. His head, you would think, 24h50.*

*This is exactly what François Bozizé Yangouvonda, Cette fois-ci No. 008, Sunday, December 27, 2020...*

**Non-Offensive Alternative:** None provided

## 12. Langba

**Other Spellings and Related References:** *Slave, mbè*

**Definition of Term or Phrase:** “Langba” is the name of an ethnic group in the Central African Republic who are part of the Banda people. The Banda, who today constitute approximately 30% of the population of the Central African Republic, were one of the groups most targeted by raids carried out by slave traders. Thus, this term appears to have been neutral, originally. It was also used by persons of Yakoma ethnicity to refer to non-Yakoma individuals. Later, however, this usage appears to have evolved and acquired a negative connotation. According to the respondents to the surveys, this term is used today to “insult and denigrate persons of different ethnicities as eternal servants.” This usage conveys that the person is “uncivilized and of a low class.” One workshop participant explained: “The Yakoma community (of the south) characterizes people from the north as Langba in order to highlight their superiority.” According to the surveys, this disparity can be traced back to the fact that “the Yakomas were favored by the colonizers and worked in their [colonial] administration.”

The insulting and inflammatory usage of this term recorded in the surveys are reflected, for example, in phrases like: “You are not Yakoma, you are a subaltern ethnicity, without value,” “look at his head: non-Yakoma, slave,” or “what is this slave doing in the midst of the people; you always want to brag.”

**Why It’s Offensive or Inflammatory:** The use of this term is burdensome in contexts where this term is used to denigrate and belittle a group of people through referencing their history in connection to slavery. The reference to slavery is dehumanizing and denigrating, as it otherizes the targeted group and stirs up contempt and distrust between communities.

**Non-Offensive Alternative:** None provided

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## 13. Mbororo

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**Other Spellings and Related References:** *M'bororo, A bororo, Bororo aga djo, Sheep, Taba*

**Definition of Term or Phrase:** “Mbororo” is the name of a nomadic group in Cameroon and the Central African Republic.<sup>20</sup> In the Central African Republic, its name appears to have become a synonym for “nomad” and is used as such. According to the surveys, this usage is utilized to refer to members of the Fulani community. The Fulani are a large, traditionally pastoral, and majority-Muslim ethnic group (of which the Mbororo are a part)<sup>21</sup> that inhabits a vast expanse of land that stretches from the Sahel to West Africa.

The respondents to the survey explained that the term can be used in a way that carries a negative connotation, such as “you are acting like a Mbororo.” In this case, this phrase means to act “foolishly, like an illiterate person” or “like a bushman, an uncivilized person,” because “someone who herds livestock never attended school.” Some participants in the workshops asserted that this could also mean that “nomadic herders are considered to be like animals.” In a similar vein, “mbororo aga jo,” which, literally translated, means the “Fulani has become a person,” means, according to the participants, “is it possible for a nomad to succeed in society?”

The negative connotations associated with “mbororo” and this usage of the term must be examined in light of the Central African Republic’s recent history, during which the country has witnessed outbursts of violence against Fulani populations. According to the surveys, the Fulani are accused of trafficking arms: “it is said that it is the Fulani who are bringing arms into the Central African Republic,” explains one participant, and are thus accused of contributing to the violence of the conflicts and the confrontations between the militias. They are also associated with the Séléka, who count members of the Fulani among their ranks.

**Why It’s Offensive or Inflammatory:** This term is insulting when it is used towards Fulanis as a group, for the purpose of indicating that the Fulani are outsiders and “are not considered to be Central Africans” because they are “nomads who are not members of the community.”

The prejudices and negative sentiments conveyed and propagated through this usage of the term help maintain distrust and fuel resentment between communities. As one participant in the validation workshops stated, this term also seeks “to convey that you are not a part of Central African society because you are nothing but a passerby.”

### Sample Post(s):



**Translation:** *English translation: Eh you mbororo or arabou without bouta you can't close your big shit mouth you are nomads now we want more of you is this complicated to leave our country calmly and if you don't leave we'll eat you long live CAR without the arabou*

**Non-Offensive Alternative:** None provided



## 14. Mouton (Sheep)

**Other Spellings and Related References:** *Bagara, Idiot, Yes-man, taba*

**Definition of Term or Phrase:** According to the participants in the validation discussions, this term has appeared recently, especially in online political discussions since the beginning of the electoral period in December 2020. It is used by members of the party in power to insult and stigmatize the political opposition. Its use is deemed to imply that members of the political opposition mindlessly follow their leader, without thinking, like sheep following the herd. As one participant in the workshops explained: “When you are totally foolish, you are naïve. You do not understand what is happening in the country.”

**Why It’s Offensive or Inflammatory:** This term is inflammatory because calling someone an animal aims to dehumanize them. The usage of this term in the context of a volatile political situation aims to insult and invalidate the demands of holders of an opposing opinion, which contributes to tensions and enflames a debate that is already very tense.

**Sample Post(s):**



**Translation:** *Sheep! Me?*

*[Picture: The Central African Republic is a SHEEP!] A.G. DOLOGUELE. THANKS, DOLOGUELE!]*

**Non-Offensive Alternative:** None provided

## 15. Séléka

**Other Spellings and Related References:** *Muslims, jihads, rebels*

**Definition of Term or Phrase:** “Séléka” is the name of a coalition of militia groups with a religious, Muslim disposition that took power in 2013 by overthrowing President Bozizé. The term means “coalition” or “alliance” in Sango. The Séléka were officially disbanded in 2013, but remain predominantly armed and active, with factions that control swathes of the territory.

According to the survey, the term is used in an inflammatory manner to stigmatize all Muslims by insinuating that the person in question is a member of the Séléka. The origins of this usage can be traced back to 2013-2014, during which violent attacks targeted Muslim populations. This usage persists to this day.

**Why It’s Offensive or Inflammatory:** Given the recent historical context in which the term has been used to justify violence against the Muslim population in the Central African Republic, this term continues to be extremely inflammatory. More generally, an accusation of being affiliated with an armed group in the context of an active armed conflict can be dangerous.

Calling a Muslim “Séléka,” a burdensome word both in terms of its meaning and its history, contributes to the deepening of distrust and intolerance towards Muslim communities in general. This usage seeks to defame the group in relation to the rest of Central African society. This strong negative connotation embeds itself within the fabric of a situation that is constantly marred by violence, thus sustaining the fear of “the Other” that permeates civil society.

**Sample Post(s):**



**Translation:** *#Mutinies, #Rebellions, and #Terrorism, #Seleka #CPC are #variants of the same virus that is the cause of #killings, #violence, #rapes, #pillaging, #refugees, #displaced people, and #misery of the Central African people.*



**Translation:** *A dog from the Séléka junkyard should be put down without delay!! #Save-the-CAR*

*By cleaning up our own environment*

*Strength and courage to the people*



**Translation:** *For decades, #Mutineers, #Liberators, #Seleka, #Rebels, or #Terrorists. They're all the same.*

**Non-Offensive Alternative:** None provided

## 16. Traître (Traitor)

**Other Spellings and Related References:** *Enemies of the peace, pro French, monafikr*

**Definition of Term or Phrase:** According to the validation workshops and follow-up interviews, this term is used in a defamatory manner against individuals who are “of a different political persuasion,” especially in online discussions about current events. It appears that the inflammatory usage of this term has increased, in particular, since the start of the December 2020 electoral period and the events that occurred thereafter.

**Why It’s Offensive or Inflammatory:** The use of the term traitor evokes strong reactions because it involves a serious accusation. It aims to stigmatize and isolate the targeted person. The current context of political volatility and of tensions between partisan supporters makes this an inflammatory term, as it portends dangerous ramifications for the individual who is targeted by the accusation of being a traitor.

**Translation:** URGENT INFO, CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC: THE EXTRAORDINARY COUNSEL FOR SECURITY OF THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC HAS INTEGRATED A STRONG TEAM OF RUSSIAN GENERALS WHO ARE READY TO GO TO THE FRONT WITH THE FACA

Bangui, this Friday, integrated a strong team of Russian generals into the Security Council of the Central African Republic. All we still need is a Defense Attaché from China.

Russian option: “we do not negotiate with terrorists, we are placing at your disposal all of the FACA battalions, along with our elite forces, and we will, without delay, neutralize the enemies of the peace.

### Sample Post(s):



December 7, 2018 · Bangui, Central African Republic · 🌐

URGENT INFO, CENTRAFRIQUE : LE CONSEIL EXTRAORDINAIRE DE SÉCURITÉ DE LA RCA ADMET EN SON SEIN UNE FORTE ÉQUIPE DE GÉNÉRAUX RUSSES PRÊT À ALLER SUR LE FRONT AVEC LES FACA

Bangui, admission ce vendredi, d'une forte équipe des généraux russes au sein du Conseil de Sécurité de la République Centrafricaine. Il ne manque plus qu'un attaché de défense de la Chine.

Option russe: « on ne négocie pas avec les terroristes, mettez à nos dispositions tous les bataillons des FACA Ensemble avec nos troupes d'élites et on va sans délai neutraliser des ennemis de la paix.

**Non-Offensive Alternative:** *Opponents*

## 17. Zo ti ngonda, villageois (villager)

**Other Spellings and Related References:** *zo ti kette kodro, peasants, bushmen*

**Definition of Term or Phrase:** This term means villager or bushman. According to the surveys, it refers to “those who live outside of the capital, Bangui.” The connotations associated with this term are explained as follows: “he/she behaves like an illiterate worthless individual in the community.”

**Why It’s Offensive or Inflammatory:** According to the participants in the validation workshops, this term is used to “demean, humiliate, and exhibit disdain towards its victims.” It contributes to the othering of the rural population, which presents a challenge to the establishment of social cohesion on the national level. According to the surveys and the validation workshops, this is a very common term, and it elicits strong emotions.

### Sample Post(s):



**Translation:** *Ah, Martin @ziguele, one poem, dedicated only to him. A victim of the Bozizé coup, we expected so much from him. But we were disappointed, he revealed himself to also be as light as cigarette paper. But especially, he revealed himself to be a potential dictator, as he did to the MLPC, his family party #CentralAfricanRepublic #CARcrisis*

*Oh! That's a villager!*



**Translation:** *Is that what you would put forward to consolidate the #RepubliquedeBangui? Ah, as you say so well in your macrocephalic capital: "a zo ti ngonda". Sad country. But we are going to save the furniture and show that doing politics is a pleasure, it is the meaning of service.*

**Non-Offensive Alternative:** *Resident of (name of village), welcome individuals, those who come from afar*

## Other insulting and inflammatory terms and phrases

The below list contains terms and expressions that were not included on the main list, but were nonetheless identified in the surveys or by participants in the validation workshops as being of interest in the context of examining the issue of hate speech in the Central African Republic. These terms were either less frequently cited by survey respondents, did not appear very recently on social media, or were not considered by respondents and participants to meet the threshold of constituting a particularly heinous and inflammatory term.

### The list is in alphabetical order

<b>Bada</b>	Squirrel
<b>Baminga:</b>	The term “Baminga” is the Sango name for a member of the Pygmy community. A good number of survey respondents mentioned that this is used in an insulting manner, but the participants in the validation workshops did not come to a consensus with regard to the question of whether it truly is used in a heinous way. At the very least, the negative connotations associated with this term are reflected in a number of prejudices displayed against the Pygmy population — for instance, that they are “profane, uneducated, and live in the bush.”
<b>CPC Behavior</b>	The Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC) is a new coalition of older armed groups that supported former President Bozizé. It was created on December 19, 2020, in response to the rejection of Bozizé’s new candidacy in the elections. Since their failed coup attempt on January 13, 2021, some have died while others (like Bozizé himself) are on the run. According to persons interviewed following the validation workshops, the expression “CPC behavior” has appeared especially online and has acquired a very bad connotation since. It refers to a person who behaves like a rebel or terrorist.
<b>The fetishists</b>	A term used to refer to Christians.

## Disclaimer

**No Legal Liability:** The information presented here is provided “as is” without representation or warranty as to suitability, reliability, applicability, merchantability, fitness, noninfringement, result, outcome or of any kind. We do not represent or warrant that such information is or will be up-to-date, accurate or complete. We disclaim any representation or warranty that might be otherwise implied. You agree that we are not liable to you or others in any way or for any damages of any kind or under any theory (in contract, tort otherwise), arising from the information presented herein.

# Appendix A: Methodology

## Scope and Design

To investigate hateful speech and conflict in the Central African Republic, the project team<sup>22</sup> first conducted a series of virtual scoping meetings with international organizations and Central African stakeholders to get their input on the issue of hate speech more broadly. Following this scoping, the team designed a survey to allow the public to contribute their experience and insights.<sup>23,24</sup>

The survey was first designed on a web platform in preparation for sharing it widely amongst Central Africans. The team also developed a paper version of the same survey, which AJEMADEC and Bria Londo enumerators used to collect responses in seven different locations.

In total, more than 480 individuals took the survey or responded to in-person questions. In December 2020, AJEMADEC (Association, Jeunesse en Marche pour le Développement en Centrafrique) validated the survey results through four focus group workshops in Bangui and Bouar. These were followed by a series of in-depth phone interviews with additional key experts in February 2021. Finally, in March of 2021, the lexicon team assembled a small group of Central African advisors who provided expert review of the draft lexicon.

## Survey

The project team decided to make the survey available in Sango, French, and English focusing on direct outreach in seven communities across the country. These included two neighborhoods in Bangui — known as Pk5 and Combattant, or the 3rd and 8th districts, respectively — as well as Bouar, Berberati, Kaga-Bandoro, Bria, and Birao. Additionally, the project team disseminated the link to the survey and survey instructions through existing networks and partner connections. This was done to gather as many responses as possible from as diverse and representative a sample as possible.

The survey was drafted by building on previous designs of PeaceTech Lab surveys regarding choice of terminology and the formulation of the questions. For the Sango and French versions of the survey, local partner AJEMADEC provided feedback and translation. By further adapting and localizing the language in the survey, the project team was able to make it accessible to a wider audience.

For the language used in the survey, the project team used “offensive and inflammatory” as a reference for the terms and phrases the project team sought to identify in the survey (as opposed to using the concept of “hate speech”). “Offensive and inflammatory” remains a more readily understood threshold that reflects hate speech’s core meaning as conveying offense, as well as possible incitement to action or discrimination. If a term were seen merely as offensive, it wouldn’t rise to the threshold of inclusion – it needed to be inflammatory as well. Even though the CAR has a codified general prohibition of hate speech,<sup>25</sup> a commonly understood and accepted definition is lacking.

The survey was hosted and distributed via the Kobotoolbox platform for ease of use, as well as for its offline data collection capabilities and reliable security features that would protect the identity of respondents as well as the confidentiality of their responses. In total, 482 individuals took the survey or responded to in-person questions.

## Focus Group Discussions, Review, and Validation

PeaceTech Lab and the United States Institute of Peace’s local project partner AJEMADEC implemented four focus group discussions in Bangui and Bouar (two in each location). The focus groups had a total of 98 participants (31 women and 67 men), with special care taken to have a diverse representation of language, religion, ethnicity, geographies, occupations, and socioeconomic status.

Based on the terms collected via the survey, PeaceTech Lab identified and submitted a list of 25 terms to each focus group. Participants were tasked with discussing and validating the initial data gathered, as well as completing the definitional and contextual information for each term (if necessary). The agenda also included discussing topics or “triggers” that could cause violence which might not have been elucidated within the restricted format of a survey.

The validation workshops provided important clarification on the definitions and usage of the terms. Importantly, they also clarified the contexts in which these terms were most potent while also bringing new terms to the researchers’ attention.

## In-depth Interviews

Following the conclusion of the workshops, five additional interviews were held with key informants arranged by the local project partners. These interviews provided an opportunity to address remaining gaps in the data, as well as to yield additional contextual information for the definitions and usage of terms.

## Expert Reviews

Finally, the project assembled a group of Central African experts to review the draft lexicon. These reviewers included experts in law, news media, and peace and security representing different communities. They contributed additional validation, analysis, and insights on the lexicon, helping to interpret the wider historical and current political context in CAR.



## Appendix B: Issues and Risks

During the development of this lexicon, the project team encountered a number of issues, limitations, and risks that it worked to mitigate.

### Time Constraints and Timing of the Study

The project's timeline<sup>26</sup> coincided with several key events and a time of considerable political upheaval in the country, including the run up and aftermath of the December 27, 2020, presidential and parliamentary elections. The lead-up to the election was mired by calls for boycott after the candidacy of ex-president Bozizé was rejected by the Constitutional Court. The formation of a new armed group coalition, the Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC), led to significant disruptions before and during the election as this group launched attacks on dozens of towns across CAR, causing the displacement of more than 200,000 people. On January 19, the CPC launched an attack on Bangui, which was repelled by MINUSCA, the CAR government armed forces, and their allies, but this brazen attack heightened political tensions and exacerbated a grave humanitarian crisis. At the outbreak of violence, members of the project team faced perilous travel conditions to hold validation workshops in Bouar as one of the key routes were blocked by the CPC, making it difficult to return to Bangui. They were finally able to return just before the election, at which point the team decided to pause further travel until the violence resolved. Conditions began to improve in March 2021.

Regular loss of connectivity and security considerations for the Bangui-based team and the participants traveling to workshops caused delays in communication and implementation. Additionally, safety considerations related to COVID-19 for all in-country teams and participants meant that all research and validation activities had to be adapted to respect sanitary precautions. As for the international lexicon team, the pandemic did not allow for PeaceTech Lab or its partner the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) any travel to CAR to provide additional support to the local partners in the implementation of the validation workshops. Limited internet and phone connectivity also further restricted remote training and design options. This forced the teams to make compromises that impacted the representativeness and breadth of the study. To meet this challenge, the team developed asynchronous training materials, utilized data collection materials with low connectivity requirements, and relied on the strong networks of local partners to reach as many communities as possible with the understanding that none of these methods would be a perfect substitute for normal in-person data collection.

As a final note regarding timing of the study, it is important to note that the lexicons are — by design — iterative. They each represent a snapshot of a country's landscape of online hateful language at a certain moment, and are meant to be updated over time. As events unfold on the regional, national, and/or international stage, the meaning and usage of terms included in the primary and additional list in these lexicons may evolve and change.

### Limitations of Online Surveys and Validation Workshops

Online surveys offered opportunities for respondents to share information and insights; however, an online form could also limit the number and demographic representation of respondents in a situation of low or unreliable internet connectivity. To work around low internet penetration and unreliable infrastructure, local partners trained and deployed enumerators in seven communities to directly engage the local population, helping to make the survey more

accessible and broaden the overall reach of the study. These in-person activities had to be conducted while taking appropriate health and safety precautions required by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The validation workshops and focus group discussions required individuals to address the terms identified via the survey (and their usage) not only individually, but also through interaction with others in the group setting — and in some cases this meant interacting with individuals from groups in society who perpetrate and/or are targeted by such terms. Rather than inhibiting speech, however, these workshops established important contextual insights and information about the potency of certain terms. They also tended to surface new terms not mentioned in the surveys.

## **Challenges Regarding Language and Translation**

The survey was distributed in Sango, French, and English. Most respondents chose to reply in Sango or French. All survey responses and sample posts were translated into French for the analysis of the data. Validation workshop discussion notes were transcribed to French from Sango. Finally, this report was drafted in French and English — which in turn had to be translated for final publication in French and English. Managing data in three languages required great diligence and care.

## **Limited Mainstream Understanding of Hate Speech Concepts**

Many of the terms identified in this study as “offensive and inflammatory” have their origins in old stereotypes and prejudices. These terms and their impact are often minimized and banalized in the modern context, despite or because of ongoing inter-communal tensions and protracted conflicts. Out of the individuals surveyed and the non-governmental organizations interviewed, most did not have a comprehensive understanding of what constitutes hate speech (and what does not), nor did they recognize its potential role in polarizing and exacerbating the many-layered and complex dynamics of conflict(s) in the country. This impacted the quality of responses to the survey, and well as the discussions during the validation workshops.

It is important to note that many survey respondents cited gendered insults against women as hate speech terms, which may be an indication of overall level of violence against women and/or a heightened level of awareness of the problem. Unfortunately, the examination of this issue is outside of the scope of this study.

## **Communication Challenges**

Technical connectivity issues (internet availability and low bandwidth, electricity outages) made continued and efficient communication with partners challenging throughout the project. This not only impacted logistics and the capacity to organize the information validation activities, but also hindered some of the collaborative aspects of the team’s research activity that had already been limited by the logistical restrictions imposed by COVID-19. Local partners are crucial to the data analysis process, as they provide additional contextual information on the historic and cultural meanings of the terms, and also bridge any translation gaps for some survey responses and validation discussions. As such, these connectivity issues imposed delays to critical activities and required additional patience and effort on the part of all of the partners to maintain communication and workflow.

## Concerns About Privacy and Security

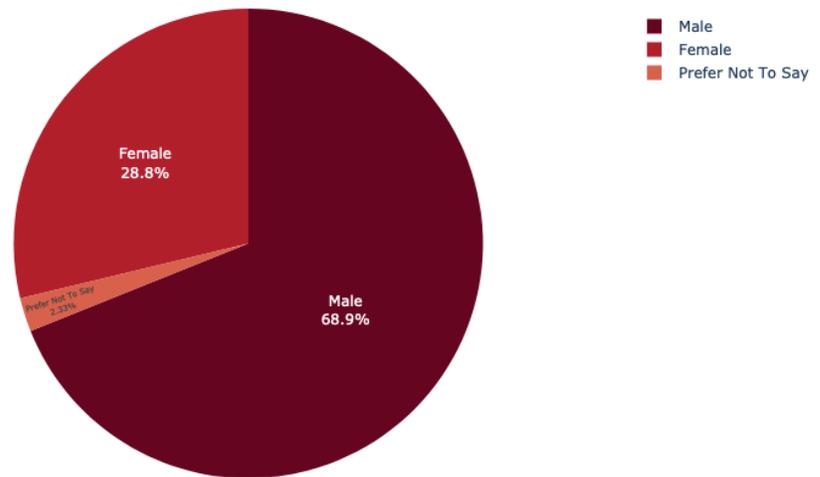
Initially, the survey required participants to submit personal information (such as their first name, last name, and email address), but feedback from partners indicated this had a dissuasive effect because most were suspicious of the use of this data and concerned about their privacy as well as possible ramifications of participating in the survey. To foster trust and increase participation, the questions regarding personal information were dropped from the open survey halfway through the information-gathering process. It is not clear from the data whether this had the desired effect of mitigating concerns. The questions were not dropped from the in-person questionnaires in cases where the interviewers could emphasize their optional nature.

# Appendix C: Survey Statistics

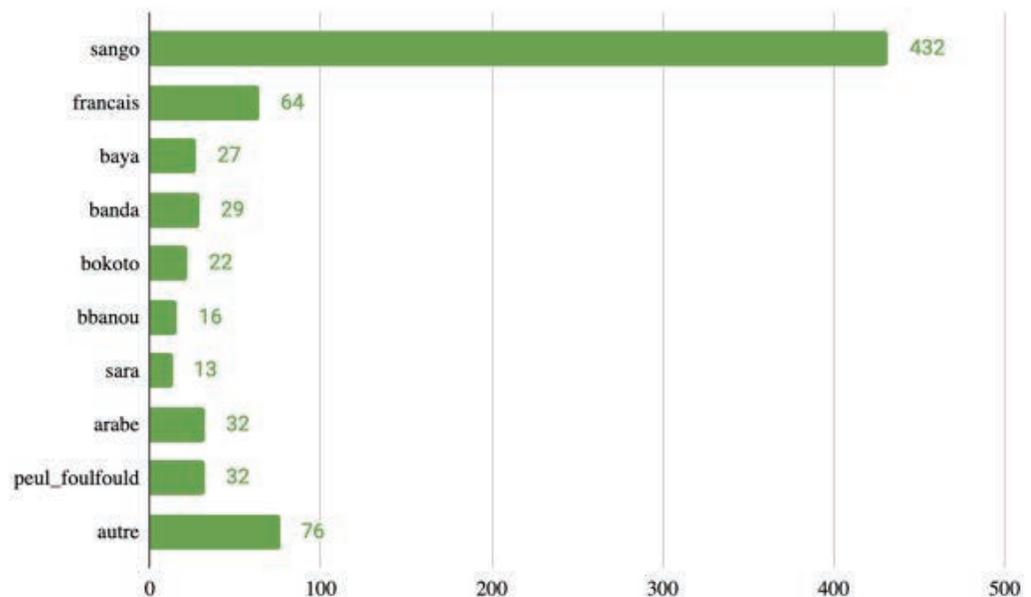
## Demographics and other statistics

- The survey was deployed from November through December 2020
- Total number of single survey responses: 482

## Gender distribution among respondents

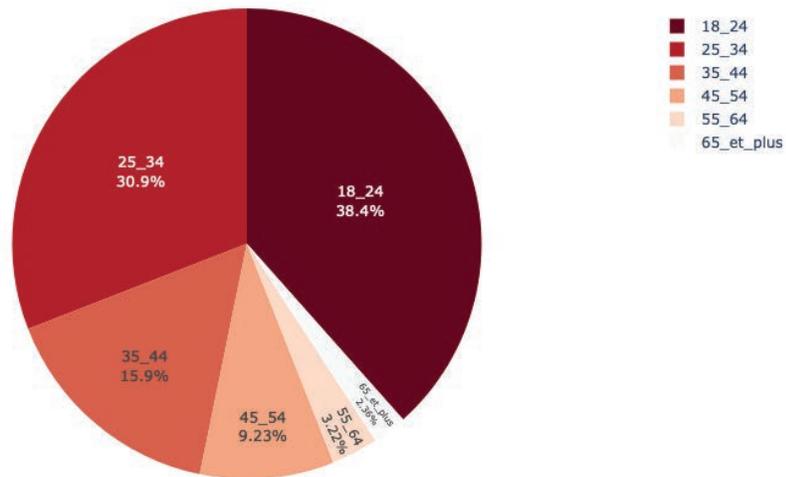
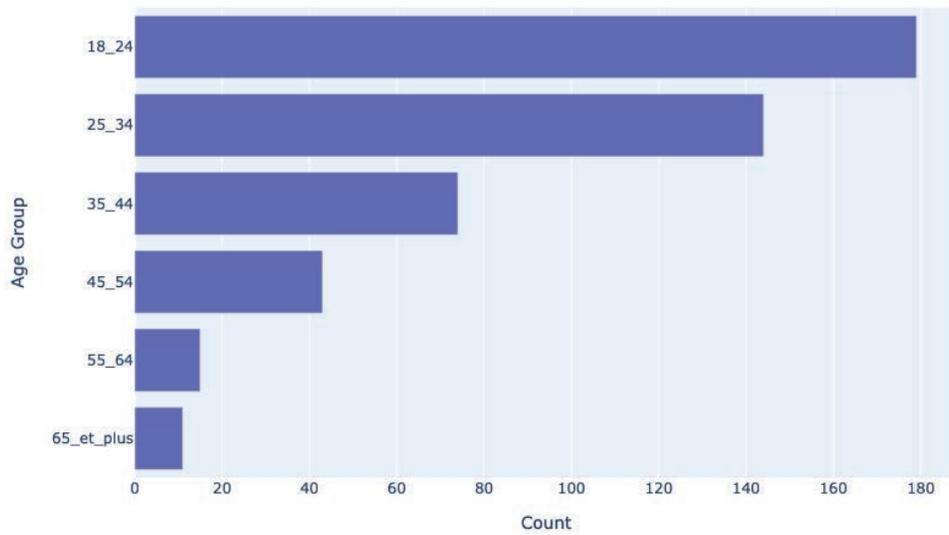


## Languages spoken by respondents

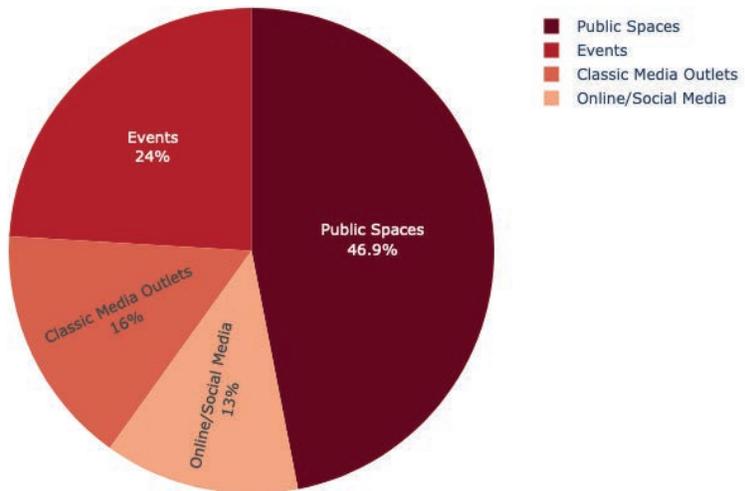
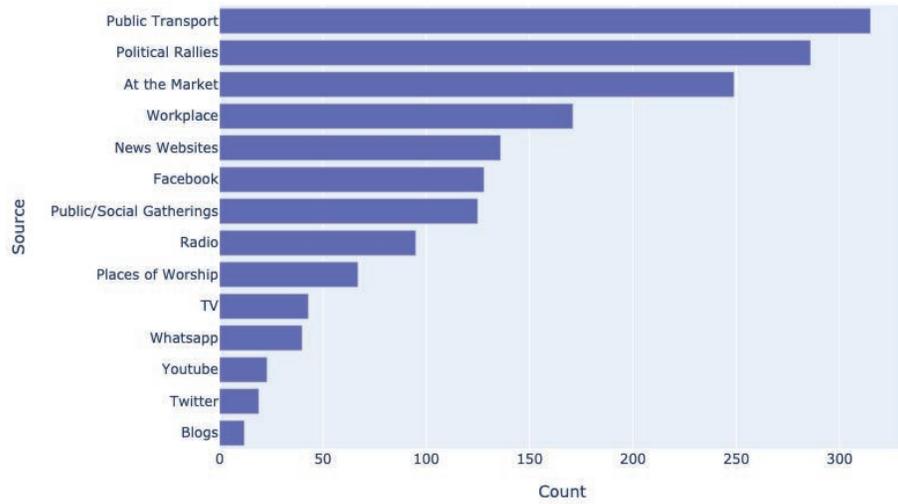
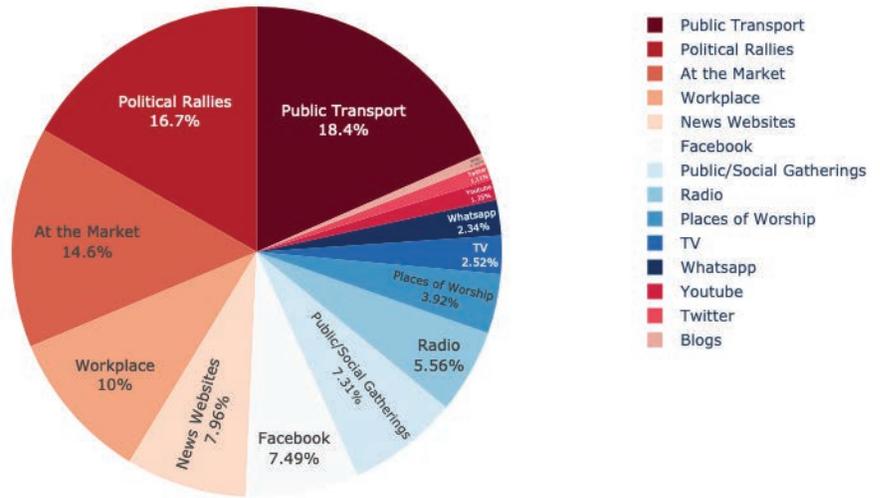


**Other: languages not listed above.** Gbougou, Sara, Dagba, Haoussa et Borno, RDC, Kaba/Kabe, Yakoma, Gbougou, Bezele, Mandja, Moussa, Pana, Anglais, Tali, Kara, Yakoma, Bambara, Sonike, Goula, Rounga, Goula, Nassalite, Borga

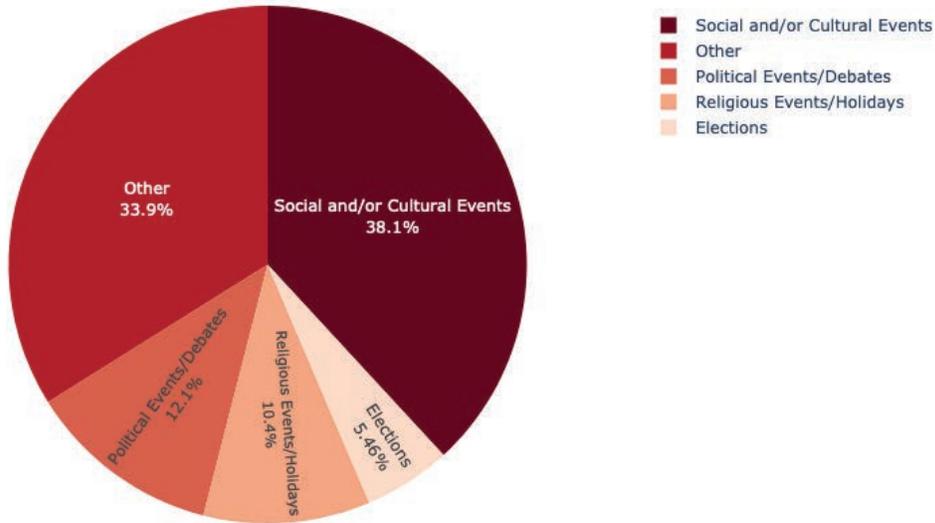
## Average age of respondents



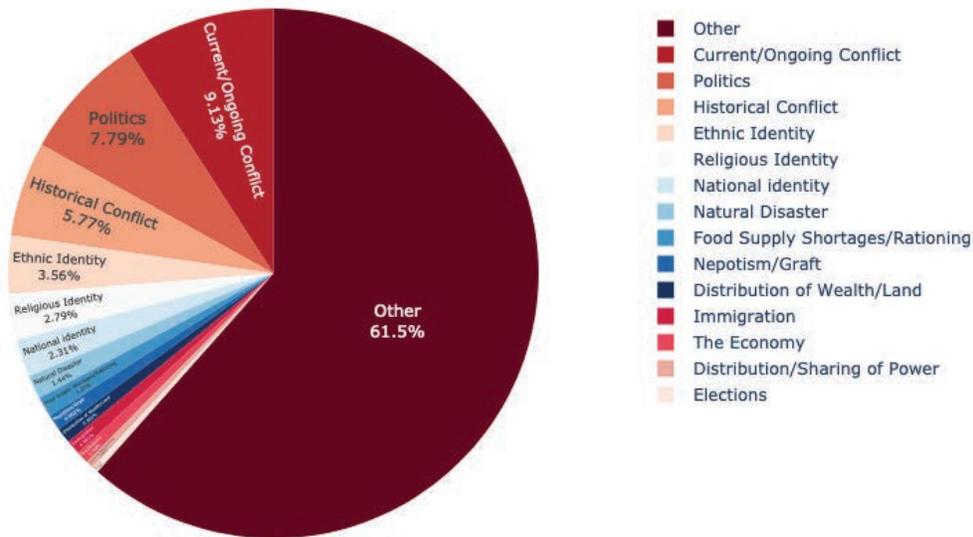
**Terms and phrases that are “insulting and inflammatory” are most often heard or read at/on:**



## Context in which these terms are heard



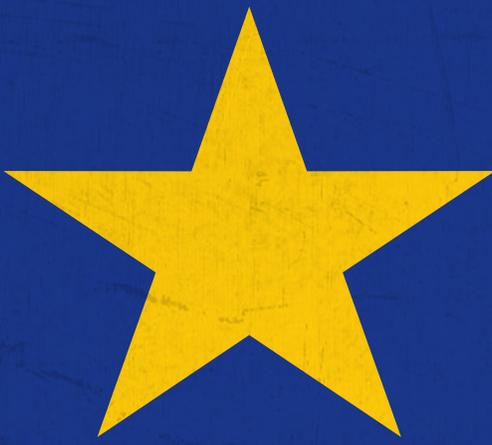
## What topics trigger the use of the “insulting or inflammatory” word or phrase?



## Endnotes

- 1 See Appendix A
- 2 See Appendix B
- 3 Lombard, Louisa. "Denouncing Sovereignty: Claims to Liberty in Northeastern Central African Republic." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. 2018. Page 1073-1075.
- 4 "Making Sense of the Central African Republic." Edited by Louisa Lombard and Tatiana Caryannis. Zed Books. London, UK. 2015. Page 3.
- 5 *Ibid.* Page 22-23.
- 6 Branshaw, Richard and Juan Fandos-Rius. "Historical Dictionary of the Central African Republic." Rowman and Littlefield. Lanham, Maryland. 2016. Page 377.
- 7 Murhula, Paul Bashizi Bashige and Norman Chivasa. Chapter 5, "Colonialism in Africa: A Forgotten Crime Against Humanity." *The Routledge Handbook of Africana Criminologies*. Routledge. New York, NY. 2021.
- 8 "Making Sense of the Central African Republic." Edited Louisa Lombard and Tatiana Caryannis. Zed Books. London, UK. 2015. Page 305.
- 9 *Ibid.* Page 307.
- 10 "Freedom in the World 2002 – Central African Republic." Freedom House. 2001. Accessed 15 April 2021 at <https://www.refworld.org/docid/473c53b7c.html>
- 11 "Making Sense of the Central African Republic." Edited Louisa Lombard and Tatiana Caryannis. Zed Books. London, UK. 2015. Page 311.
- 12 Sources differ on the exact meaning of the term. Some say it translates to "Anti-Machete," while others say the longer form of the name is "anti-balles à ti laka," meaning "anti-bullets of the AK-47."
- 13 International Commission of Inquiry on the Central African Republic: Final Report." United Nations S/2014/928. Page 95. Accessed April 15, 2021 at <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/N1471229.pdf>
- 14 "UN Official Sees Genocide Threat in Central African Republic." Voice of America. August 22, 2017. Accessed April 15, 2021 at <https://www.voanews.com/africa/un-official-sees-genocide-threat-central-african-republic>
- 15 "CAR: Experts call for a ban on hate speech ahead of elections." ONU Info. December 16, 2020. Accessed April 15, 2021 at <https://news.un.org/fr/story/2020/12/1084712>
- 16 See the Methodology section for more details.
- 17 <https://www.la-croix.com/Actualite/Monde/Combats-a-Bangui-a-la-veille-de-l-intervention-francaise-en-Centrafrrique-2013-12-05-1071533>
- 18 Conseil des droit de l'homme: Examen périodique universel de la RCA, 14 mars 2019,
- 19 Droits LGBT en RCA, Wikipedia
- 20 Minority Rights Group International, Mbororo
- 21 Des Peuples Autochtones francophones en mouvement, GITA
- 22 Comprising staff and consultants of PeaceTech Lab, the US Institute for Peace (USIP), and Central African civil society partner organization Association, Jeunesse en Marche pour de Développement en Centrafrique (AJEMADEC)
- 23 This was the same process taken by the lexicon research teams for developing the Cameroon lexicon in 2018, the Nigeria Lexicon in 2017 and the South Sudan Lexicon in 2016 <https://www.peacetechlab.org/combating-online-hate-speech-main>.
- 24 For the lexicon of hate speech terms used in the conflicts in South Sudan, see <http://www.peacetechlab.org/hate-speech-in-south-sudan>, 2018.
- 25 Art 295, Loi N 10.001 du 6 Janvier 2010
- 26 August 2020 - April 2021
- 27 Minority Rights Group International, Mbororo
- 28 Des Peuples Autochtones francophones en mouvement, GITA





## ABOUT PEACE TECH LAB

PeaceTech Lab works for individuals and communities affected by conflict, using technology, media, and data to accelerate local peacebuilding efforts. An independent non-profit organization, the Lab's mission is to amplify the power of peacetech to save lives through earlier warnings and smarter responses to violence. The Lab's programs emphasize a data-driven, cross-sector approach, engaging everyone from student engineers and citizen journalists to Fortune 500 companies in scaling the impact of peacetech.



PEACETECH LAB